

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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R 180445Z NOV 77

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1775

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 8052

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, PFOR, PINT, AS

SUBJ: THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS: A THIRD POLITICAL FORCE?

REF: CANBERRA 7981

1. SUMMARY: IT IS NO EXAGGERATION TO STATE THAT TO DATE
THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS AS A POLITICAL PARTY IS THE EX-
PRESSION OF ONE MAN, FORMER LIBERAL MP AND FORMER MINISTER

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DON CHIPP. THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE FEW CLEARLY
ENUNCIATED POLICIES. THEIR MAIN ELECTORAL APPEAL, RUNNING
AT ABOUT FIVE PERCENT IN CURRENT POLLS, IS NEGATIVE--THE
GENERAL UNPOPULARITY OF PM MALCOLM FRASER AND OPPOSITION
LEADER GOUGH WHITLAM (FRASER'S POPULARITY RATING IS
CURRENTLY 39 PERCENT, WHITLAM'S 30 PERCENT). ALTHOUGH
LONG OPPOSED TO FRASER, CHIPP WOULD PROBABLY STILL BE A

MEMBER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY IF HE HAD BEEN NAMED TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT CHIPP WILL BE ELECTED TO THE SENATE IN VICTORIA AND THAT ONE OR TWO OTHER LOCAL PERSONALITIES MIGHT GAIN ELECTION TO THE UPPER HOUSE AS WELL. HOWEVER, THERE IS VERY LITTLE, IF ANY, CHANCE THAT THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS WILL GAIN SEATS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ALTHOUGH THEIR PREFERENCES WILL BE IMPORTANT IN SOME MARGINAL SEATS ON DECEMBER 10. END SUMMARY.

2. DON CHIPP IS AN INTERESTING AND COMPLICATED MAN. HIS FATHER WAS A LABORER AND CHIPP HAS REMARKED THAT HE GREW UP IN A "SOLID LABOR HOUSEHOLD" DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION. HE WAS CONTEMPTUOUS OF THE CAPITALIST CLASS; "THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM WAS OUT TO SCREW THE WORKER." AS A YOUNG MAN HE FELT THAT HE WOULD BECOME A FITTER AND TURNER AS WAS HIS FATHER, BUT EVENTUALLY SHOCKED HIS FAMILY WHEN HE ANNOUNCED THAT HE INTENDED TO GO TO HIGH SCHOOL RATHER THAN TECHNICAL SCHOOL. SKIPPING TWO GRADES HE MATRICULATED AT, THEN OBTAINED EMPLOYMENT AS A CLERK WHILE ATTENDING UNIVERSITY PARTTIME. FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II MILITARY SERVICE, CHIPP OBTAINED A DEGREE IN COMMERCE FROM MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY USING THE EQUIVALENT OF THE GI BILL. WHILE AT THE UNIVERSITY, HE ADMITTED FLIRTING WITH COMMUNISM BUT QUICKLY DROPPED THE EXPERIENCE. THE PROFESSOR WHO MOST INFLUENCED CHIPP WAS DR. JIM CAIRNS, LATER A LEFT-WING DEPUTY LEADER OF THE ALP IN PARLIAMENT. HOWEVER, CAIRNS, CONFIDENTIAL

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WHOM CHIPP HAS DESCRIBED A "FIRST-RATE TUTOR AND A HARD WORKING GUY" WAS UNABLE TO CONVERT CHIPP TO SOCIALISM. CHIPP LATER ADMITTED THAT HE WAS MOST IMPRESSED BY SOCIALISM BUT BECAME CONVINCED THAT "IT COULD ONLY WORK IN UTOPIA, WHERE NO ONE COMMITTED SIN."

3. CHIPP WAS FIRST ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT IN 1960. HE BECAME MINISTER OF THE NAVY IN 1966, BUT WAS DROPPED FROM CABINET BY JOHN GORTON IN 1968 AFTER CHIPP SUPPORTED BILLY SNEDDEN IN OPPOSITION TO GORTON FOR PARTY LEADERSHIP. IN 1969 CHIPP AND GORTON MADE UP THEIR DIFFERENCES AND CHIPP RETURNED TO CABINET. CHIPP EVENTUALLY REACHED THE HIGH POSITION OF LEADER OF THE HOUSE IN THE LAST LIBERAL GOVERNMENT BEFORE GOUGH WHITLAM WON FOR THE ALP IN 1972.

4. IN OPPOSITION FROM 1972-75, CHIPP SERVED AS A SHADOW MINISTER IN VARIOUS PORTFOLIOS. DURING THE INTERIM FRASER GOVERNMENT (FROM NOVEMBER 11, 1975 UNTIL THE DECEMBER 13, 1975 ELECTIONS), FOLLOWING THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S DISMISSAL OF GOUGH WHITLAM AS PRIME MINISTER, CHIPP HAD THREE MINISTRIES: MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS. HOWEVER, FRASER

UNCEREMONIOUSLY DROPPED CHIPP FROM CABINET AFTER THE 1975 ELECTIONS. IN THAT CHIPP, A SMALL "1" LIBERAL, HAD LONG OPPOSED FRASER INCLUDING SUPPORT FOR BILLY SNEDDEN IN HIS LEADERSHIP FIGHT WITH FRASER, HIS DISMISSAL FROM CABINET WAS PREDICTABLE. HOWEVER, IT LEFT CHIPP SO EMBITTERED THAT HE EVENTUALLY RESIGNED FROM THE LIBERAL PARTY IN 1976, ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD NOT SEEK RE-ELECTION TO THE LOWER HOUSE, AND ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD FORM A NEW PARTY IN OPPOSITION TO THE L/NCP COALITION AND THE ALP. THE IMMEDIATE TRIGGER FOR CHIPP'S DECISION TO LEAVE THE LIBERAL PARTY WAS HIS ATTENDANCE AT A REPUBLICAN DINNER ON THE SAME NIGHT THAT HE DECLINED A PARLIAMENTARY DINNER IN HONOR OF QUEEN ELIZABETH. THIS INFURIATED A LARGE NUMBER OF VOTERS IN HIS ELECTORATE
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AND MIGHT WELL HAVE COST HIM PRE-SELECTION FOR HIS SEAT IN PARLIAMENT HAD HE DECIDED TO SEEK RE-ELECTION TO THE LOWER HOUSE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CANBERRA 8052

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

5. ALTHOUGH THE AUSTRALIN DEMOCRATS HAVE GAINED A NUMBER OF PROTEST VOTES IN ONE VICTORIA ELECTORATE AND IN A FEW AREAS WHERE IT CAMPAIGNED IN QUEENSLAND, CHIPP'S NEW PARTY HAS BEEN BURDENED BY LACK OF FUNDS, A RESULTANT LACK OF PUBLICITY AND STAFF, AND BY THE ABSENCE OF SPECIFIC PROGRAMS. IT IS KNOWN THAT CHIPP OPPOSES THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON URANIUM MINING, THAT HE FAVORS INCREASED GOVERNMENT SPENDING TO COMBAT UNEMPLOYMENT, AND THAT HE IS A REPUBLICAN. HOWEVER, IS OTHER DOMESTIC POLICIES, EXCEPT THOSE GENERALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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FAVORED BY LEFT OF CENTER LIBERALS -- INCREASED WELFARE, INCREASED SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION, INCREASED ASSISTANCE TO THE ABORIGINES, THE ARTS, ETC-- ARE UNCLEAR. HE HAS MADE NO POLITICAL PRONOUNCEMENTS ON FOREIGN POLICY OR FOREIGN INVESTMENT, ALTHOUGH IT CAN BE ASSUMED THAT HE REMAINS A SUPPORTER OF ANZUS AND THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE. CHIPP HAS SAID THAT HE WENT INTO POLITICS BECASUE OF HIS "LOVE FOR MY FELLOW MAN." IT IS MORE LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT HE FOUNDED HIS NEW POLITICAL PARTY OUT OF BITTERNESS OVER NOT BEING INCLUDED IN PM FRASER'S GOVERNMENT AND BECAUSE OF HIS FIRMLY HELD CONVICTION THAT FRASER IS TOO REACTIONARY A MAN TO LEAD MODERN-DAY AUSTRALIA.

6. CHIPP HAS A FAIR CHANCE OF WINNING A SENATE SEAT IN VICTORIA BECAUSE OF HIS PERSONAL POPULARITY (CHIPP IS HIGHLY PERSONABLE, ARTICULATE AND POPULAR IN THE CENTER-LEFT), HIS HIGH RECOGNITION FACTOR, AND BECAUSE OF THE PECULIARARITIES OF THE AUSTRALIN PREFERENTIAL VOTING SYSTEM. ROBIN MILLHOUSE, A FORMER LIBERAL-MOVEMENT POLITICIAN, NOW AN AUSTRALAN DEMOCRAT, COULD ALSO WIN IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA. HOWEVER, THE AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE LITTLE OR NO CHANCE OF GAINING A SEAT IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ALTHOUGH THEIR PREFERENCES COULD HAVE A BEARING ON MARGINAL LOWER HOUSE SEATS ON DECEMBER 10.
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Message Attributes

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